

Michigan
Department
of Human
Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394

*DHS cited in stories

Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, September 9, 2008

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

Subject	Page
Abuse-neglect*	2-5
Civic engagement*	6
Foster care	7
Home heating credit	8

Chance of a lifetime

By KEVIN ALLEN

Herald-Palladium Staff Writer

The story of a 6-week-old girl who allegedly was beaten by her father a few weeks ago in Coloma Township has put a spotlight on a sad reality that workers in the Michigan Department of Human Services deal with every day.

Although the infant girl's case is extreme – she suffered multiple fractures, bruises, had opiates in her bloodstream and showed signs of potential sexual abuse, according to medical reports – it is just one of thousands of cases of child abuse and neglect reported each year in Michigan. The state's Children's Protective Services specialists found evidence of abuse or neglect in more than 17,000 cases affecting nearly 30,000 children during fiscal 2007, according to a DHS report. The most common forms of maltreatment are physical neglect and physical abuse. In roughly 90 percent of those cases, the perpetrator is a parent, the report said.

That leads to a constant demand for stable foster homes and loving families interested in adoption, said Jerry Frank, Berrien County DHS director.

He said there are some 400 children and 115 licensed foster homes under DHS supervision in the county. The goal is to reunite children with their biological parents or relatives when possible and safe for those children, Frank said. When that's not possible, the DHS makes every effort to keep siblings together. Frank said roughly one-third of the children under DHS supervision have been reunited with their parents. When a case involves injury to a child, the DHS will file a petition in Berrien County Trial Court to take jurisdiction over the child, he said.



Frank

A preliminary hearing was held last Thursday for Barbara Lefevre, the 27-year-old mother of the Coloma Township infant. The county has petitioned to terminate Lefevre's parental rights to the girl for allegedly failing to protect the child. She is scheduled to go to trial Oct. 21.

The father, Jason Ward, 34, is facing two felony charges of first-degree child abuse and administering a prescription drug (OxyContin) without a prescription. He is being held in the Berrien County jail while he awaits a preliminary examination scheduled for Oct. 2.

Lefevre lost parental rights to her other five children Aug. 6. Frank could not disclose specific information about Lefevre's case.

But he said in most cases where a parent has had parental rights terminated for other children, the DHS will also investigate terminating rights to subsequent children born to that parent. The state has a system called Birth Match that cross-checks new birth records and prior terminations of parental rights, he said. If a child is born to a mother who has had parental rights

terminated in the past, the DHS will investigate whether the parent should have rights to the newborn. But there is a hole in the system.

“There must be a termination of parental rights by the court prior to the birth of the child,” Frank said.

If a mother is pregnant during the process to determine her parental rights and she gives birth to the child before parental rights are terminated, the DHS might not know about the newborn. “The supervising agency needs to be aware of the pregnancy. But if the parents disappeared from supervision and the agency was not aware of the pregnancy, they would not be able to report that,” Frank said.

Such situations are rare, he said, as most parents cooperate with the DHS during the process to determine parental rights.

“In a typical case, there is extensive contact with the parents and the children,” Frank said. On July 16 – five days after

Lefevre gave birth to the girl who was beaten – a legal notice was published in The Herald-Palladium informing Lefevre of the Aug. 6 hearing to terminate her parental rights to her other children. The publication means Lefevre had not been in contact with the DHS during those proceedings to determine her parental rights. Children are kept in foster care during the legal process.

If the goal is reunification with the parent, the child will return home within a year, Frank said. When reunification is not the goal, such as in cases of severe injury to the child, parental rights can be terminated within 30-45 days.

He said many adoptions are by foster parents who have children in their care, but that also leads to turn-over among foster families.

“We have some turnover because foster parents may adopt and decide, now that they’ve adopted, they no longer wish to do foster homes,” Frank said.

He said the DHS hosts orientation sessions for prospective foster parents and training programs to help families become licensed for foster care.

“It is a wonderful outcome for kids who have been sadly neglected or abused,” Frank said. “For a child, it’s a second chance – literally the chance of a lifetime – for that child to have a loving, stable family.”

Contact Kevin Allen at kallen@TheH-P.com



Birch Run officer pleads not guilty to touching girls; headed to trial

Posted by The Saginaw News September 09, 2008 06:59AM

FLINT -- A Birch Run police reserve officer is scheduled to face a jury in October.

Mark R. Rutherford pleaded not guilty Monday before Genesee County Circuit Judge Judith Fullerton.

The 37-year-old Flint man faces four counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and one count of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Second-degree conduct is a 15-year felony that involves touching. Fourth-degree is a two-year high court misdemeanor.

Rutherford has a jury trial scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 23.

Mount Morris Township police claim Rutherford, who works as a security guard at Kettering University in Flint, fondled at least three teenage girls during a campout he helped chaperone over Memorial Day weekend in Mount Morris Township. Valley Church of Christ in sponsored the campout.

© 2008 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Boy accidentally kills friend with golf club

Playmates were practicing swings

BY TAMMY STABLES BATTAGLIA • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • September 9, 2008

A devastated Holly father said he hopes talking about the death of his 7-year-old son from a child's metal golf club will help prevent future tragedies.

Bryce McVety died Friday night after his 7-year-old friend accidentally hit him in the head with the golf club as the two sports-loving, longtime neighborhood buddies practiced their swings.

"These little golf clubs, these steel ones they buy for their kids, that's what took my son's life -- a child's golf club," Jeff McVety said Monday, his voice trembling and barely above a whisper.

Bryce and the other boy swung the clubs as the other boy's dad walked into the garage to get some yard equipment, and they apparently got too close to each other, Michigan State Police Capt. Harold Love said.

"The dad heard a noise and ran back out, and the victim lay on the ground and he was unconscious," Love said.

The father immediately took Bryce to nearby Genesys Regional Medical Center in Grand Blanc, where the boy was pronounced dead.

"Just a tragic, tragic, unfortunate accident: Kids doing what they do, and he got struck in the head," Love said.

The Michigan Department of Children's Protective Services interviewed the boy who swung the club and deemed the death an accident. The Free Press is not naming the boy or his family because of the nature of the accident.

McVety said the members of the other boy's family -- close friends -- are devastated. The two boys, both second-graders at Holly Academy, had been friends for years.

"They're feeling the same pain as we are, I'm sure," he said. "I don't know what else to say but be very careful."

Bryce's funeral is set for 11 a.m. today at the Apostolic Church, 3655 N. Squirrel Road in Auburn Hills. Burial will be at Lakeside Cemetery in Holly. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial contributions be made to the family through the Celebration of Life Web site at <http://web.mac.com/djefh/brycemcvety>.


[Submit News](#) |
Member Login: Email: Search: ☒ Local News ☐ Classified ☐ Web [News Digest](#)[Obituaries](#)

POSTED: September 8, 2008

[Sports](#)[Outdoors](#)[Local Classifieds](#)[Jobs](#)[CU Galleries](#)[Blogs](#)[Services](#)[Save](#) | [Print](#)

News Digest

[News](#)[Lifestyles](#)[Obituaries](#)[Editorial](#)[Letters to the Editor](#)[Engagements](#)[Weddings](#)[Anniversaries](#)[Submit News](#)> [News Digest](#) > [News](#)

Monday's news briefs

Event planned to register voters

ESCANABA - The Delta County Department of Human Services will hold a Voter Registration Fair. The event is 1 to 4 p.m. at the Delta County Department of Human Services, Delta County Complex, 2940 College Ave., Escanaba.

At the fair, DHS clients and local residents can receive information on all aspects of voting, practice casting a ballot, and register to vote. The deadline for registering to vote in the Nov. 4 general election is Oct. 6.

Voter Registration Fair is a collaborative effort between the Delta County DHS and the Delta County clerk. As of July, 28, 307 people have registered to vote in Delta County. Throughout the year Michigan residents may obtain a voter registration application at their DHS office and register to vote there and at any other DHS office across the state.

For more information, go to the agency's Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs

- - -

Sports Digest

[Sports](#)[Sports Columns](#)[Outdoors](#)[State Sports](#)[National Sports](#)[Submit Sports](#)

News Elsewhere

[Michigan News](#)[National News](#)[International News](#)

Classifieds

[Local Classifieds](#)[Michigan Classifieds](#)[Jobs](#)[National Classifieds](#)[Place An Ad](#)[Subscribe to Daily Press](#)

Special Sections

[Neighbors 2007](#)[Junior Photo Contest](#)[Wedding Planner 2008](#)[Active Life -- July 2008](#)[Active Life -- August 2008](#)[Summer Visitor's Guide 2008](#)[Active Life -- September 2008](#)

CU Galleries

Online Extras

Share:

[Facebook](#)[MySpace](#)[Digg](#)[Stumble](#)[Buzz up!](#)[Mixx](#)[Fark](#)[del.icio.us](#)[LiveSpac](#)

Brown bag campaign aids foster kids

By MARK SPENCLEY

Tribune Staff Writer

CHEBOYGAN - As school starts and winter approaches, its a sad reality that many Michigan children are left wanting for school supplies and winter coats while they transition into the foster care system. The Brown Bag Campaign is working to change that.

The Brown Bag Campaign is put on by Child and Family Services and works with newspapers to increase awareness of area children's' needs.

Carl and Penny Jana, of Cheboygan can attest to the success of the program.

“People could never imagine how helpful this program is,” said Jana, the adoptive mother of five children and foster care provider. “A lot of these kids come here with nothing of their own and this program provides them with something that is theirs.”

The campaign works by providing a small, brown paper bag with each newspaper printed by a cooperating newspaper. Donors then place their contribution into the bag, stamp it and mail it. The bags were included in the Cheboygan Daily Tribune in a recent edition.

During the past 18 years this program has raised \$170,000 for children in need.

“The Brown Bag Campaign not only raises money for kids in need right here in our community,” said Jim Scherrer, executive director of Child and Family Services. “It calls attention to the vital need for people who have room in their hearts and their homes to become foster and adoptive parents.”

Scherrer also noted that Child and Family Services is averaging about 180 children per day enrolled in out-of-home placement.

For more information on the Brown Bag Campaign, or on how to become a a licensed foster parent, call Child and Family Services at 231-946-8975.



September 9, 2008

Sept. 30 deadline to seek heating credit

Michigan residents who earned less than 110 percent of the federal poverty guidelines probably are eligible to receive a Michigan Home Heating Credit for 2007. It could amount to about \$200, but they had better hurry up if they want to get the money.

Sept. 30 is the deadline to apply for the 2007 credit. State and utility officials are trying to spread the word about the credit because so many people who are eligible simply do not apply for the money.

The credit, is for low-income residents. For a single person, that is someone who earns less than \$11,243 a year; for a couple, \$15,072. A family of six can earn \$30,386 and still be eligible.

Residents do not need to have filed a state income tax return in order to apply for the credit. But they *do* need to fill out a Home Heating Credit form (MI-1040CR-7) which is available at most public libraries; Secretary of State branch offices; Department of Human Services branch officers; online at www.michigan.gov/treasury; or by calling the Michigan Department of Treasury's toll-free line at 800-367-6263.

Information about the Home Heating Credit was mailed out with last month's Consumers Energy utility bills and also is available online at Consumers Energy's "Energy Answers" section of its Web site at www.consumersenergy.com or by calling the utility's toll-free help line at 800-477-5050.

Heating our homes is becoming a growing expense for everyone. But it is especially important that low-income residents take advantage of assistance that is available to help them keep their homes warm. Last year, more than 378,000 Michigan residents received a total of \$77 million in aid. The Home Heating Credit program is funded by the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program and the credit can be applied to all heating costs, including propane and the purchase of firewood.

But in order to receive it, eligible residents must apply by Sept. 30.
